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suitable girl for one of his sons who is to inherit his farm. 581
The choice of the heir from among the sons rests in the 584
father's hands. Historically, all the sons and daughters were provided for on the land, and, where possible, this is still the ideal situation, but the closer identification of family with one particular plot of land and the difficulty of land division fostered through three generations of agrarian agitation and land reform have prevented this. One son, then, is ordinarily to be "settled on the land." Typically today only one son remains, and he gets the farm.

In the words of one countryman, the procedure would be: 583 ●

If I wanted to give my farm over to my son and I would be 584
worth, say, two hundred pounds, I would know a fellow up the hill, for instance, that would be worth three hundred pounds. I would send up a neighbor fellow to him and ask him if he would like to join my family in marriage. If the fellow would send back word he would and the girl would say she was willing (and the usual courtesies were exchanged), then on a day they agreed on I and the fellow would meet in Ennistymon (the local market town) and talk over the whole thing as to terms, maybe sitting on it the whole day. Then, before, if it was land I didn't know or the fellow came from afar off, I would walk his land and look at it and the cattle there were on it to make sure of the farm. Then we would go to a solicitor that day and make up the writings in Ennistymon. The money, say three hundred pounds, would be paid over in cash or in promissory notes, and it is usual here to divide it into two parts or sometimes more. One-half is paid at the wedding, and the other is paid a year after.

This statement contains in essence nearly the whole of matchmaking. As the old fellow indicates, the initiative in the matter lies with the owner of the farm, usually the father of the boy. When the time comes for him to relinquish the farm, he lets it be known in the district to those who have daughters ready to be dowered. On the other hand, the father of the girl may often take the initiative, letting it be known that his daughter has a dowry at such and such a

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583 figure. In either case, when a suitable boy or girl has been
584 found, the farmer sends an emissary to his or her parent. The relative value of the farms and the "fortune" that a farmer will give for his daughter are generally pretty well known in the district, but where the two families are comparative strangers, or belong to different localities, the role of the emissary in laying the proposals of one set of parents before the other is more important. The emissary is not a relative of either party ordinarily. Certain individuals become well known locally as successful negotiators. In former days there was once a fully developed "matchmaker" or marriage broker. The office is said to exist still in Connemara, but it has died out in Clare.

584 Quite often a well-known shopkeeper or local politician comes to play the role. One in particular in Ennistymon (a market town of 1,200) came under the author's notice. The back room of his public house reserved for special customers became one of the centers of local matchmaking. It was there that the fathers of both boy and girl would meet and "sit on the match." Their deliberation, to the accompaniment of many bottles of stout, threshes out the whole matter of the disposal of the properties involved,
[582] the relative status of the families, and any possible barriers to the union, such as consanguinity, insanity, or notorious crime in past ancestry.

584 The bargaining is a matter of nice adjustment between
583 the "fortune" and the farm. The custom known as "walking the land," referred to above, insures that the farm is roughly equivalent to the fortune, though each party strives for a higher valuation of its own claims. Thus, where a fortune of five hundred pounds has finally been agreed upon, the girl's father will have offered only four hundred and the boy's will have held out for six hundred, instancing all the prospects and advantages of his farm in support of his figure. Finally, through the offices of the intermediary

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and after concessions on each side, the two will "split the difference" and thus reach an agreement. The decision rests with the fathers, but they will have had the quite vocal assistance of friends and older members of the kindred.

Perhaps the words of a countryman best describe the matching of values and prospects the bargaining entails. Farm and spouse are inextricably interwoven in his mind:

When a young man is once on the lookout for a lady, it is put through his friends for to get a suitable woman for his wife. It all goes by friendship and friends and meeting at public houses. The young man sends a speaker to the young lady and the speaker will sound a note to know what fortune she has, will she suit, and will she marry this Shrove? She and her friends will inquire what kind of a man is he, is he nice and steady? If he suits, they tell the speaker to go ahead and draw it down. So then he goes back to the young man's house and arranges for them to meet in such a place on such a night and we will see about it. The speaker goes with the young man and his father that night, and they meet the father of the girl and his friends or maybe his son and son-in-law. The first drink is called by the young man, the second by the young lady's father. The young lady's father asks the speaker what fortune do he want. He asks him the place of how many cows, sheep, and horses it is. He asks what makings of a garden are in it; is there plenty of water or spring wells? Is it far from the road or on it? What kind of house is in it, slate or thatch? Are cabins good, are they slate or thatch? If it is too far in from the road, he won't take it. Backward places don't grow big fortunes. And he asks too is it near a chapel and the school or near town? If it is a nice place, near the road, and the place of eight cows, they are sure to ask three hundred and fifty pounds fortune. Then the young lady's father offers two hundred and fifty pounds. Then maybe the boy's father throws off fifty pounds. If the young lady's father still has two hundred and fifty pounds on it, the speaker divides the fifty pounds between them, so now it's two hundred and seventy-five. Then the young male says he is not willing to marry without three hundred pounds – but if she's a nice girl and a good housekeeper, he'll think of it. So there's another

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584 drink by the young man, and then another by the young lady's father, and so on with every second drink till they're near drunk. The speaker gets plenty and has a good day. After this, they appoint a place for the young people to see one another and be introduced. The young lady takes along her friends, and maybe another girl, and her brother and father and mother. The young man takes along his friends and the speaker. If they suit one another, they will then appoint a day to come and see the land. If they don't, no one will reflect on anybody, but they will say he or she doesn't suit. They do not say plainly what is wrong. The day before the girl's people come to see the land, geese are killed, the house is whitewashed, whiskey and porter bought. The cows get a feed early so as to look good; and maybe they get an extra cow in, if they want one. Then next day comes the walking of the land. The young man stays outside in the street, but he sends his best friend in to show the girl's father round, but sure the friend won't show him the bad points. If the girl's father likes the land, he returns, and there will be eating and drinking until night comes on them. Then they go to an attorney until the next day and get the writings between the two parties and get the father [boy's] to sign over the land. Then there comes another day to fit her for a ring. The girl and boy meet in town some day. He buys her some present. They walk the town that day and all admire the pair and gander after them.

584 583 577 Several instances have come to notice where agreement was not reached and where a farmer has broken off negotiations on finding a girl with fifty pounds more. There are also many subterfuges which, though they are regarded by others as humorous occurrences, are often sore spots between the contracting parties. Thus a farmer near Ennistymon drove his neighbor's cows into his farm on the day of the girl's father's walking the land so that the other would think him richer than he was. After the marriage the deception was discovered, but too late.

[626] In another case, a sure penalty overtook a farmer who abused the bargaining system. I give the description of a neighbor:

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He's nothing but an old blatherer, he was always sitting on matches and saying he would give a fellow his daughter when he hadn't any fortune on her at all. He'd break it off by saying the girl wasn't willing and all the time it was only boasting and drinking the porter he was.

Today the boaster is a local joke, and his daughter has fled to America.

A famous local character round Ennis, a laborer now dead, once bested a countryman through a judicious whetting of the farmer's cupidity at matchmaking. The story goes that the laborer broke the countryman's bargaining resistance by distracting his attention from the cow he was selling at the fair to the prospects of a match between the farmer and a purely fictitious sister, who was dowered with an equally fictitious three hundred pounds. Later when the farmer and his friends came to town again to discuss the matter further, the wit told them elaborately that, after making full inquiries, he had decided they belonged to too respectable a family to allow themselves to make a match with his sister, since the sister had already "a little one" out of wedlock.

Another case of subterfuge practiced illustrates a variation in the match. A fellow near Ennistymon got a farmer with a daughter to back his note at the local bank to the extent of six hundred pounds. The borrowing was kept secret, and the endorser does not seem to have known that the security offered was his own farm. Accordingly, when the borrower later offered to bring in the six hundred pounds in marrying the daughter, the farmer accepted, thinking he was to receive the fortune clear of debt. He discovered only too late that he had a son-in-law whose fortune he must make good himself. The deception led to bad blood between the two, but nothing could be done.

This last example illustrates a reversal of the usual procedure. Ordinarily since the Irish farm family is both

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583 patrilineal and patrilocal, the fortune is brought in by the girl and goes to the father of the boy. When, however, there is no male heir, the incoming son-in-law must give a fortune to the farm holder. Generally the man's fortune is much larger than that of the girl. It may be that the necessity for its being larger arises from the fact that he has no land of his own. Frequently the farm into which he marries is known for at least a generation longer by the name of the girl's family, which reflects the identification of the patrilineal line with a particular plot of land, so strong in rural Ireland. It may be that the additional payment is deemed necessary to overcome the anomaly felt at the reversal of the usual roles of sons and daughters. The Irish term for an in-marrying son-in-law is a graphic one; it is *cliamhan isteach* (literally, son-in-law going in).

583 584 A quite similar case illustrates not only the position of the man marrying-in but the different aspirations which may be involved. A local politician, a farmer himself, and an automobile driver, a farmer's son, arranged a match for a girl who had lately inherited a farm and a thriving shop in a tiny country town. The prospective groom was a "returned South African" who had brought back two thousand pounds. At the last minute negotiations fell through because the young woman objected to the South African's obesity. The driver was to have got a hundred pounds out of it. We learned that several weeks later a second match arranged for the South African turned out more successfully.

[831]

583 The "fortune" is a prerequisite of country marriages. even divorced from its usual family setting. Many instances can be cited where returned immigrants have come back with dowries made abroad, to marry into local farms. In three cases that the authors had under particular observation, the small farmers' daughters had spent five, eight. and ten years respectively in the United States as domestic servants. Each returned to Ireland with dowry enough to

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permit her to marry into local farms, in two of the cases on a somewhat better scale than the farms which they had left. The case of the South African shows how the man also may return with his fortune to establish himself in his native district after several years or even a decade or two of exile. 583 ●

The dowry or marriage portion is, of course, a phenomenon universal in European peasant life. What gives it special interest here is its intimate connection with the farm family and with the land. That connection is evidenced particularly in the "writings."

After the "walking of the land" and the making of the bargain, the two parties to marry go to a solicitor. There the agreements reached are cast into proper legal form. The "writings" is a legal instrument conveying the ownership of the holding to the son. It is usually both marriage settlement and will. On the event of the stipulated marriage, the father conveys the farm and all appurtenances to his son in return for the portion brought in by the girl. The father makes also definite provisions for his own maintenance and that of his wife. Generally, these include the right to the "grass of a cow," to food and the use of the hearth, perhaps the yield of one patch of potatoes, and the use of a room in the house. The room is nearly always, at least in West and North Clare, the one known as the "west room" for reasons we shall examine later. To take care of possible disputes arising out of the failure of these provisions to work smoothly, certain very hard-headed stipulations are often included, allowing for the conversion of these rights into cash support or a lump sum. 583 584 428 883

In return for the farm, the father receives the fortune brought in by the girl and paid to him by her father. Furthermore, the provisions which must be made for other children are often transferred with the land. The father is now expected to give (if he has not given them already) portions to those of his children who are not to be settled 583 428

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583 428 at home on the land. Where the will and marriage settlement are one and the same document, these obligations are passed on to the inheriting son.

The following description of several "writings" (which we examined) given by an Ennis solicitor specializing in this lucrative practice illustrates the type and the possibilities of variation. The solicitor is describing certain marriage settlements, the originals of which he held in his hand:

> In this settlement John F— of C— had one son and two daughters at home. He left the farm, you see, all that goes with it, to his son on condition of his marrying the girl named here in the deed. He also made the transfer subject to the son's providing for the two daughters by giving them rights of residence and keep in the house as long as they remain unmarried, and by making them special money gifts when they should marry. He then reserved a right for his wife, leaving her a small sum, and the right to the potato patch and her bedroom free of all charge as long as she lived. In the event of her not liking the new arrangements, she was to get a monthly stipend in lieu of her keep and room until she died.

We shall go on to give this interview in some detail to illustrate the full character of the arrangements made. The solicitor continues:

> If there are two sons . . . one of them gets the farm, and when the old people find a girl with a suitable fortune, and the son marries her, they give the money over to the next son, or they provide with it for the other children who haven't yet gone off. It's a pernicious system. [An upper-class person is speaking, not a farmer.] You'll go out to a small holding and see several able-bodied men and women waiting around doing nothing. They are waiting for the eldest son to get married and for their share of the fortune the wife brings in.

674 What may happen when such an arrangement fails to work smoothly for one reason or another may be seen from the following examples. The first is the description (recorded in the course of a general conversation, not elicited in any

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674 herein described. A case in County Clare in K— parish [6] shows the same provenance of conflict in a disturbance of the traditional pattern. The following extract from the diary of one of the authors gives the setting of the dispute:

674 578 January 19th. K – District Court. Nothing much in court today but the following case: Two lads about nineteen were up for having tarred the house of Tim Nihill, the publican, night before the last fair. This wasn't an isolated occurrence; attempts have been made to intimidate Nihill over a period of years. The guards agree he is himself a peaceable citizen. Both Mr. –, the justice, and Mr. –, the local superintendent of civic guards, agreed that the lads were only "tools of some one behind the scenes who is inciting them." The justice bound them over, gave them a stiff fine. Later he explained to me that a certain Mr. Mulvaney has been calling Nihill a land-grabber in the districts and setting the lads on him. Last year the house was fired into in the night. It all arises out of a farm which Nihill owns and which Mulvaney says ought to be his. Mulvaney is landless now, only a farm laborer. His mother, who had the farm, was to have left it to him, but he made a runaway match with a servant girl and his mother wouldn't let them into the house. So she sold the farm to Nihill for cash and some debts outstanding and Mulvaney has been blackguarding Nihill ever since.

[583]

583 This story introduces the whole position of "runaway matches," as elopements are called. There are a few instances of coercion into matches. The autobiographic sketch of one Hannah M—, an old woman, the widow of a petty shopkeeper, illustrates the form which it can take. To paraphrase her:

She is eighty-four, and guess how long she has been a widow. forty years. She's been behind the counter all the time. She has a sister in America with nine children. The sister sent her over her passage, but the family tore it up and married her here in Ennis. She wanted to be a teacher; the work was easy, the holidays (ample) and it was a good job. There were three candidates

[6] Fictitious names for persons and smaller places have been substituted in this and following incidents.

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her year and she got first. At that time her sister sent over the passage money, and she was about to go when they stopped her and married her into this shop. Her sister was coming over before the marriage but her fiancé wouldn't let her go for fear someone would snatch her up too. 583 ●

Ordinarily, as so many of the examples we have already given show, marriage in the matchmaking system is a matter of free agreement within the traditional setting. Love enters the situation, however, only to complicate it. A runaway match upsets the whole pattern, the interplay of dowries, land, and portions of it for children, the transition between adulthood and old age for the parental couple. There are other considerations, too, which account for the disturbance a runaway match creates, such as those of class involved in "marrying beneath" one, but they are outside our present subject. 583 581

The following story illustrates the case. A countryman is describing a happening in his district:

Tom L— was making a match for his daughter with a fine farm of land, and they got as far as picking the gander [the name of a feast given by the bride's people slightly before the wedding]. They were all up there eating and drinking and dancing all night. Now a fellow from Ennistymon [town] came to it, but he was such an ordinary fellow he was not even invited into the front of the house but stayed in the kitchen. He was so poor and lazy, he brought a little turf to market sometimes, but that was all. Next day, the girl came down to the chapel to be married, and before they knew it, didn't she run off with this fellow. Tom cut her off and disowned her, and she's living in Limerick with her fellow now, but it might be in Australia for all Tom will do for her.

Even when matters have not gone so far, the runaway match causes a grave disturbance and destroys the cohesion of the family. The following account given by a publican in Ennis of country acquaintances shows that reconciliation occurs after a time, but that the disruptive effect upon the 583 578

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583 family is severe. We give the statement in detail in order
578 to show the general situation as he saw it. He is a townsman, and somewhat detached.

> The daughter on the farm has to wait till all the sons are got ready for their going off and maybe have been given their passage to America or money to set up in business or to settle on the land. But there are runaway matches all the time, they fall in love, they run off together, and they come in here and take work away from the laborers here. It takes a lot of love and courage because the son is usually cut off and the daughter leaves a very good place for nothing but a cabin and they get none of the money. Maybe after several years the girl will get her fortune, but not always. I remember Jerry N — whose father was very well off as farmers go, but he wouldn't marry the girl they picked for him and took up with a servant girl instead. He's driving a hackney now and lives in a cabin with a flock of children. Jimmy L — ran off but he gradually became reconciled with his people. The father had a good farm of sixty acres, and so had the girl, but the young fellow got nothing out of it. His father helps a little now, sending down a bag of potatoes.

602 Another case which the authors had under observation
593 from time to time illustrates not only the matchmaking
578 system but the general family setting in which marriage
627 takes place and farm life moves. Sanctions for conduct aggrieving the families are applied by the families themselves. The case is long but worth quoting in the words of the teller for its comprehensive character:

> There was a girl of the O'Rourkes from D —, they have a farm out there and she married a fellow named Murphy up in C —. She was a school teacher out in England for several years and she became great with this fellow the farmer, and she used to send him money over from England for when they would get married. She sent about two hundred pounds in all. She has an aunt up in C — married up there and it was all the fault of the aunt. She came home and she hadn't yet told her people anything about it. She was just about ready to get married to the fellow and she told them that she was going to get married. They agreed. Then she said she was going to get married to

In matchmaking, too, legal form may be subordinated to
583 country-bred aspirations. To insist upon the full letter of
842 the contract, even if its purpose is not fulfilled, is meanness. It is a breach of social convention, even though quite within legal right. For the "writings" is a formal legal instrument nowadays. Not all the farmers have gone so far in safeguarding himself as one F— in Inagh did. "He put it in the writings that he would pay the last half when his daughter was safe delivered," so we were told. For the provisions of the match reflect again the identifying continuity and the importance to all parties of the girl's bearing children for the family into which she marries. Most often the second instalment of the fortune is not paid until the first child is born, or, with more legal formality, till a year after the marriage contract is completed. One informant summed the matter up:

583 768 If the woman dies after a year and the first part of the fortune is paid, the man doesn't usually claim the rest, although he may be mean enough to claim it. For the young man can marry again. If the man dies, the girl is given the money if there is no heir and is sent home. If there is, then she gets the place.

583 Let us reëxamine the dowry in the light of this complexity of interrelated factors. As has been explained, the fortune goes to the farm owner, in ordinary cases the father of the boy. At the match, land, house, cattle, and household effects move from father to son just as kinship relationships move and as adult status moves. One family, that of the old couple in which the son was merely one of the children, is partially destroyed in order to make way for a new one, in which the son and the incoming wife are now the adult married couple. The movement of goods corresponds to social forces. And the fortune brought in by the new wife moves from her father to the boy's as if to recompense the father for his loss of the farm. It is significant that the fortune is paid always in money. Try as we might, we never found it paid in any other way. Land, cattle, and household effects

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are not used but are inalienably associated with the family. This is a new development. In Carleton's day, before the famine, a daughter was often dowered with goods as well. Today this is not the case, for the goods like the land are part of an indivisible and corporate whole.

In this way, when we remember that the farm is identified in popular thinking with the patrilineal and patronymic family line of the landowner and that the girl is an outsider brought into that group, the money appears as a payment for the girl's inclusion. There is significantly no corresponding recompense or payment to the girl's father. He loses both daughter and dowry. The identification of his family, both immediate and ancestral, with the family farm is undisturbed. Of course the father of the girl makes sure that his prestige does not suffer. He demands that the farm she enters shall at least equal the dowry. The size of the dowry he gives his daughter is a very strong index of that prestige. It is both a duty and a great source of pride to provide well for her.

A further indication of the nature of the movement of the dowry is to be found in the terminological (formal) structure of the family which we have already described. It will be remembered that there was no integration between the boy's father and the girl's, and that relationship by affinity proceeded only from the point of view of the young couple. The two fathers-in-law or mothers-in-law are not felt to be related. No kinship terms express the new connection between them. Clearly, then, we have two patrilineal groups still unmerged, still distinct. That this is the case can be seen in Carleton's[1] descriptions of faction fights in which two families are often pitched against one another in spite of their alliance by marriage. The authors have seen some of them, not on the scale of faction fights, it is true,

[1] William Carleton, peasant novelist (1794–1869), principally *Tales and Sketches* (Dublin: J. Duffy, 1843) and *Traits and Stories of the Irish Peasantry* (10th complete ed.; London: W. Tegg, 1864).

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583 142 FAMILY AND COMMUNITY IN IRELAND
602 but ones in which brothers-in-law flared up to strike one another even though after a week or so the two connections became reconciled.

428 Up to this point we have failed to distinguish between
583 wills and marriage settlements in the statement of match-making and transfer of farms. The confusion is justified because in so many cases they are one and the same. Nevertheless, the subject of wills made apart from the son's marriage needs discussion. If our conclusions as to the nature of farm marriage are valid, something of the same play of changes, obligations, and goods must be present.

Money in the dowry functions to recompense the farmer for his relinquishment of the farm and the break-up of the family which he headed. Similarly, in the cases where inheritance proceeds without marriage, money plays the same role. There are many instances in which the old farmer has demanded payment for the property his heir is to receive. Let an Ennis solicitor describe his experience with one of them:

428 I remember an old fellow, Jimmy B — of K — who was taken
763 off dying to the County Home. He called for me to go out there and make a will for him. Seven wills I made for that old codger before he was through. He hadn't any idea of dying. He had only ten or fifteen acres of a farm, but he said he would give it to his son [only] if the son paid him ten pounds a year for it. They often do that, make the son pay from ten pounds to fifty pounds a year for the land. Then [when the solicitor pointed out that the son would inherit the money anyway as the old fellow had no other heirs], old Jimmy made me make another will leaving the money itself to the son.

Another case the authors knew involved no son. The old fellow left a small farm to his cousin and even though he was on the verge of dying, he forced the cousin to pay for it.

In still another instance, an old fellow had some land and about two hundred and fifty pounds to give away. He gave

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daughters with two hundred pound fortunes, settled three sons and a daughter with her husband in each of the farms. Pat himself, the eldest, now about eighty, got the largest farm but not the one he wanted. He has been warring with his brothers and his neighbors ever since. He held out against his father for five years, refusing to marry and take his farm. In Pat's youth, land agitation and reform had not yet prevented subdivision and acquiring of new farms by a successful tenant. Pat on his fifty-acre mountain farm has married off a daughter locally at three hundred pounds and sent two sons out to America. Another daughter works in England. Two sons, aged forty-three and thirty-six, are at home and Pat hasn't made up his mind yet which one shall get the land.

The examples, various as they are, need not be multiplied. The sons and daughter who are not to be portioned at home, in the words of the Luogh residents, "must travel." To that end both the savings of the family, created through their united efforts under the headship of father and mother, and the incoming dowry, are devoted. In Luogh there had been only four marriages in ten years; two of them were the usual farm-transferring matches, one a returned emigrant who married a boyhood sweetheart and bought a farm, and one a widower who took a second wife and a second fortune. An old woman described the situation: "There aren't any matches nowadays. Nobody has a fortune to give his daughter and the young men must travel." Yet the woman who lamented this state of affairs was carefully husbanding half crowns for her baby granddaughter's fortune.

Nevertheless this necessary dispersal of the members of the family at its reorganization does not ordinarily destroy the family ties. The bonds of affection and family obligation still hold. If they have emigrated, the family members send back remittances and passage money for nephews and nieces and brothers and sisters left at home. A great many farms, especially in West and North Clare, are partially supported by Christmas gifts from Americans and other exiles. It is

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183 577 832 otherwise unaccountable cases in which a man or woman abondoned farm and fortune and the favor of friends for a sexual attraction. How else to explain, for instance, an old man's senile infatuation, a young boy's indiscourageable devotion to an older woman who could bring him nothing?

583 A word must be said here of the other ways of bringing about marriage than the formal process of family matchmaking. In the last century, to judge from the accounts of the old people, and to follow the testimony of novelists on Irish life, a stage-managed elopement was often resorted to. It was a semi-respectable kind of marriage. The swain and his friends kidnapped the bride out through the window in the night. They took her away from her father's house to the house of an uncle or other relative of the young man's. There dancing and general jollity reigned, and the young couple were feted. Very often all parties seem to have connived at the result. On other occasions, the elopment was obviously designed to bring about a match to which parents objected or to force parents to a decision. Staged elopements of this kind seem now to have died out in Clare, or at least to be rather infrequent. But the difference between this and a true runaway is slight. In the latter case the young couple take matters into their own hands entirely. Throughout the years many couples have eloped, run off to towns and to emigrate without parental blessing. Others have done likewise and returned to get their portions and a delayed parental sanction. Nevertheless one can see that all these forms are mere modifications upon the dominant convention.

583 581 They too must lead into the familistic pattern. A match must be made, or at least fortunes given and provision for family re-formation made. In cases of premarital pregnancy, the match may be forced or hastened, but it is nonetheless the final and respectable resolution.

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584 The Inagh farmer goes on: "The speaker goes with the young man and his father that night, and they meet the father of the girl and his friends or maybe his son and son-in-law. The first drink is [273] called by the young man; the second by the young lady's father.

"The young lady's father asks the speaker what fortune do he want. He asks him the place of how many cows, sheep, and horses is it? He asks what makings of a garden are in it; is there plenty of water or spring wells? Is it far in from the road, or on it? What kind of house is in it, slate or thatch? Are the cabins good, are they slate or thatch? If it is too far in from the road, he won't take it. Backward places don't grow big fortunes. And he asks, too, is it near a chapel and the school, or near town?"

The Inagh countryman could pause here; he had summarized a very long and important negotiation.

583 "Well," he went on, getting to the heart of the 584 matter, "if it is a nice place, near the road, and the place of eight cows, they are sure to ask £350 fortune. Then the young lady's father offers £250. Then maybe the boy's father throws off £50. If the young lady's father still has £250 on it, the speaker divides the £50 between them. So now it's £275. Then the young man says he is not willing to marry without £300—but if she's a nice girl and a good 273 housekeeper, he'll think of it. So, there's another 584 drink by the young man, and then another by the

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
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developed from wicker constructions which, like the stone weirs, were once built by shore dwellers for their own needs. But weirs were not the only structure built in tidal waters. The inquiring visitor will observe along many stretches of coast straight lines of stones running out to sea which are the remains of little piers alongside which small boats could lie. Back of them beyond the reach of the tide there may be the ruins of a boat shelter which might never have been more than a rectangular pen of stone walls or earth banks. Such pens are still used to protect the curraghs of the west coast from the wind which is their worst enemy.[1] The vessels are in addition weighted down with stones (Fig. 75), and to this end the gunwales often project at the rear of the curraghs to give purchase for the boulders (Fig. 78).

On the lonely and now abandoned island of St. Kilda the portion which a woman took to her husband on marriage is said to have been 'a pound of horsehair to make a gin to catch fowls'.[2] Martin Martin in his account of the island also tells us that the 200 inhabitants yearly killed and preserved above 20,000 birds, and in addition prodigious numbers of seabirds' eggs were consumed. The killing of seabirds and the taking of eggs for export to England during the worst period of food shortage in the second world war brought about a temporary revival of old skills on many parts of the Irish coast. Down to times still remembered fowling was a seasonal activity on most of the islands where seabirds assemble to nest. Birds of the auk family were caught in horsehair 'dulls' (snares) pegged to the ground. For other birds such as rock pigeons the snares were baited. July was the busy month, and the birds not eaten in this 'hungry month' were salted down for the winter. On Rathlin Island the cliffs and sea-slopes were apportioned in strips and demarcated by spikes driven into the rocks. It is remembered that single men in search of eggs would let themselves alone down ropes attached to iron pins in the cliff edge. Traditions of other ways of catching the birds have been lost but one may be fairly sure that the various methods described by Martin Martin and more recently by Kenneth Williamson for the

[1] S. Piggott, *Antiquity*, 28 (1954), 19–24.
[2] Martin Martin, *The Western Isles*, 317.

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
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at that time and that the ceremony presumably took place in the priest's house.)

'Whichever of the new married couple first rises after the nuptial benediction, will, it is considered, live longest . . .; after this scene is over they again adjourn to the public house . . ., after which the company again mount their horses, the bride being then changed behind the bridegroom's man, and scamper away towards the bride's house, whilst numbers of people are collected on the hills and eminences to behold the race for the bottle. The winning of the bottle is frequently contended for between the bridegroom's and the bride's parties; the first person that arrives at the bride's house is victorious. The victor then receives the bottle and again returns to the main body of the wedding, where he hands it to the bridegroom, who first drinks of it and hands it to his bride, who also partakes, it then goes the round until nearly finished, when . . . the bridegroom flings it with the remaining contents away. On their arrival at the bride's house a cake of oatmeal or flour, which is called the bride's cake is broken over the bride's head, and is greedily seized upon by young people of both sexes for the purpose of placing a portion of it under their pillow, in order that they may dream of their future partners in life. Another scene of noisy festivity and drunkenness then commences, which often terminates in riot and bloodshed between the different parties; there being frequently a kind of rivalry between them in supporting the dignity of the bridegroom and bride, particularly if they do not happen to be of one line of ancestors.'[1]

No doubt where land and livestock were involved such marriages were not so uninhibited as it might appear. Physical attraction was not a prime consideration. The normal course was for a peasant to marry a girl whose capabilities were known or could be fairly judged, preferably 'a far-out friend', who lived close enough for family visits and exchanges of labour to be made. We know from other accounts of marriage customs in the early nineteenth century that the order of events as described above was sometimes reversed: 'The marriage is agreed upon by bargain, and the theft or abduction follows as a concerted

[1] J. Donaldson, *Upper Fews*, 64–66.

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
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matter of form to make valid the marriage.'[1] After the famine, at least, the mutual attraction of the suitors themselves was a secondary consideration. An ill-favoured girl could be made pretty with a dowry of cows or its equivalent in cash, known in the west as 'dry-money'. A marriage between near relatives was not unknown if it meant keeping the name on the land or enlarging the patrimony: 'a blanket is the better of being doubled,' it was said. 'We are all related one way or another' is a comment one hears in isolated mountain districts. In general romantic love was the luxury of the landless, but whatever the motives of marriage there were many charms and omens to be taken into account in winning a person's affections, and some of the magic devices to which a girl might resort are listed in one of Bryan Merryman's poems of the late eighteenth century:

> Up the chimney stuck the flail
> Slept with a spade without avail,
> Hid my wool in the limekiln late
> And my distaff behind the churchyard gate;
> Flax in the road to halt coach and carriage,
> And haycocks stuffed with heads of cabbage.[2]

To this day the marriage or remarriage of old men to young women is regarded as unnatural and wrong, perhaps because it complicates the question of succession. In Co. Wexford, and probably elsewhere, unpopular marriages of this kind are marked by noisy gatherings of young men who serenade the married couple with horn-blowing. A similar custom, the *vito*, is well-known in Andalusia, where it includes the ringing of cow-bells and the singing of scurrilous songs. One of the strangest traditional features of Irish weddings is the visitation of 'straw-boys', that is youths wearing straw masks who attend as uninvited guests and disport themselves at the dance which normally follows a wedding (Fig. 88). I am told that they may still be seen occasionally in Co. Cavan and parts of the west. Formerly the visitors also wore straw suits or white shirts and red petticoats decorated with coloured ribbons. The leader

[1] Wood-Martin, *The Elder Faiths*, 2, 82.
[2] *The Midnight Court*, translated by Frank O'Connor (1945).

16:Messenger E-4,5 (1955-1966) 1969 ER6 Rural Irish ER6
(1959-1960) Inis Beag

Numerous factors are weighed by the representatives of the future spouses before a match is consummated. Uppermost in the minds of the relatives of the man is the size of the dowry that the woman will bring to the marriage. In the decade 1951 to 1960, the average dowry was 50 to 60 pounds, but at least one reached 100 pounds. This sum now is used to finance the wedding party, but once it went to provide the passage and "settling in" money for an emigrating sibling, to furnish the dowry for a daughter, or to make life more comfortable for the aging parents. Land and capital (and other status attributes soon to be discussed) possessed by the father or widowed mother of the man are the focal concern of the woman's relatives during matchmaking. Among the factors which enter into the deliberations of both bargaining parties are: the presence in either family line of mental illness or other afflictions which can stigmatize, the economic skills and industriousness of the potential spouses, the number of cognates (relatives on all sides of ego limited only by degree of kinship) which compose the two kin-groups and their propensity to assist and defend (and not to engage in disputes), and the mutual attraction of body and personality of the future spouses. The folk believe that young persons approaching marriage "should have known each other for a long spell" and that "the two should be alike"—as to family position, education, and temperament. It is common for a woman to choose not to marry a man to whom she may be attracted because his mother is overly jealous and domineering, or there are "too many old people in the house."

Most weddings take place on Tuesday during the hour before noon, at the direction of the curate, but at one time they were conducted between four and five o'clock in the afternoon, so that the guests could hurry back to the groom's house "to make a night of it;" the morning ceremony means that festivities commence in mid-afternoon and the party often is "stale by nightfall." Each family invites its circle of relatives and friends who congregate at the respective domiciles in the morning, where the men are served whiskey. The groom's entourage then accompanies him to the house of the bride, and another "round" is proffered them before the procession is formed for the journey to the chapel and back. Three men lead the column at some distance from the bride and groom, to ward off those with the evil eye or any other malignant forces which might threaten the couple. Close behind the bride and groom are the "best man" and "maid of honor," followed in order by the two fathers, male guests in a group, and at the end female guests; the two mothers do not attend the wedding, nor does the bride's mother participate in the matchmaking or allow her daughter to return home until a month following the nuptials (Formerly, she did not enter her daughter's house until a grandchild was born.).

Grooms long have worn mainland attire for the ceremony, but only in 1960 did the first bride do so. Before then, the woman wore a new blue petticoat, accouterments purchased in shops at a nearby mainland port, and a shawl for the first time, draped over the shoulders. Her hair had remained uncut until this day, and she and the groom wore borrowed items of clothing—she usually the shawl and he a coat or tie—to bring luck to their marriage. During the nuptial service, the man not only places a ring on the finger of his bride, but gives her seven shillings with which to buy later a holy picture, or some other object of her

16:Messenger E-4,5 (1955-1966) 1969 ER6 Rural Irish ER6
(1959-1960) Inis Beag

Implicit in these statistics are such Irish phenomena as monogamy, the predominance of the nuclear family (Only 10.3 percent are extended in Inis Beag.), family exogamy, patrilocal residence, and a high incidence of celibacy. The last listed bachelor who lives with his widowed sister-in-law, and frequently is visited by a brother's adolescent grandson from the mainland, is regarded by many bachelors as fortunate—"He has a woman and a boy to work and no 'responsibilities.'"

Inheritance in the island is patrilineal, and before a man can marry, his father or widowed mother must "pass on" the property to him. To encourage aged men to surrender ownership of their land, a statute forbids their receiving the old age at 70 years until they have so acted. But despite this law, six Inis Beag elders aged 70 to 79 years—with a total of seven bachelor sons ranging in age from 32 to 47 years (not counting eight others who have emigrated but are eligible to inherit) —still maintain ownership themselves. When a man is without sons, he most commonly wills the land to a brother's son or arranges to have a man wed his daughter and "marry in" to the household. An in-marrying son-in-law, it is interesting to note, may pay a bride wealth, which usually is much larger than the dowry of the girl, for he has no land of his own. Among contemporary landholders, five have obtained property from uncles, six from widowed mothers, and two by marrying in. Other land in Inis Beag has been procured through purchase, exchange, gift-giving, and land dispute verdicts.

A major cause of celibacy, late marriage, disputes, and emigration related to the system of inheritance, seldom mentioned either in writings about Inis Beag or by the islanders, is the common practice of a father playing off his sons against one another for the patrimony in order to achieve favored treatment for his wife and himself in their waning years. Elders are well treated, in part as a result of the above and in part out of the fear that after death their ghosts will punish those who have maltreated them. Often the playing off of sons for the patrimony leads to factionalism within the family and may provoke a secretly favored son to emigrate or, more seriously, all sons acting in concert to depart in anger and disgust. Today, a total of 22 married men, widowers, and widows whose average age is 65.7, hold land that is inheritable by a total of 56 sons whose average age is 30.1 years. (The 16 elders who have a total of 20 sons in the island average 66.7 years of age and their offspring 33.6.) The uncertainty about which sibling will inherit is reflected in these figures: of the 59 present landholders, 47 percent are first born, 42 percent second, 8 percent third, and 3 percent fourth and beyond.

Although the Inis Beag family is totally exogamous, the village is only 78.3 percent exogamous (The range for the four villages is from 75 to 83 percent.). Since 1911, six women have married men, mostly farmers, living in communities along the neighboring coast and only one an Inis Thiar islander, while four mainland and five Inis Thiar women have wed men from Inis Beag. During this same 50 year period, six local men have married into contiguous mainland settlements and one into Inis Thiar, but no men from the outside have married into the island. As we have noted already, immigrants for two or three generations are regarded as strangers by the folk, and the same is true of in-marrying wives; these women are treated aloofly and are the victims of much spiteful gossip. Many female siblings marry locally rather than emigrate—one case of four sisters, five of